

News Release



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McCRAKEN DAZZLES IN STREET SENSE TO REMAIN UNBEATEN; KENTUCKY JOCKEY CLUB IS NEXT

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, Oct. 30, 2016) – Whitham Thoroughbreds LLC's **McCraken** sat just off a swift pace, angled wide coming around the far turn and took command at the top of the stretch to win Sunday's fourth running of the \$83,470 Street Sense Stakes by a dazzling 3 ¾ lengths on opening day of Churchill Downs' 21-day Fall Meet.

The opening day card was billed as the 12th annual "Stars of Tomorrow I" with each of the 10 races devoted to hopeful 2-year-old prospects that have aspirations of trail-blazing their way to next year's Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands and Longines Kentucky Oaks. Over the years, the event helped launched the careers of **48 future Grade I winners** and **31 millionaires**, including 2010 Kentucky Derby champ **Super Saver**.

McCraken just might be one of the sport's next stars.

Trained by **Ian Wilkes** and ridden by **Brian Hernandez Jr.**, McCraeken clocked one mile over a fast track in a swift 1:35.55, which easily eclipsed Coastline's 2013 stakes record of 1:36.77.

Speedmeister, the odds-on 2-5 favorite, lived up to his name and set a quick opening quarter of :22.73, a half in :45.89 and three-quarters in 1:10.78 just one length in front of **Singing Bullet** who tracked in second with **Balandeen** another 1 ½ lengths behind in third.

Speedmeister gave way approaching the top of the stretch as McCraeken began passing up rivals and asserted himself to the front under mild urging from Hernandez.

"We wanted to get him out the back because this was his first time going one mile," Hernandez said. "We wanted to get him to do it the right way and once I got him back, he settled great. I got to the half and I kind of checked on him to see how much horse I had and he started getting into those horses without me moving on him at that point and he just zoomed right on by him."

Balandeen held on for the place spot, while **Guest Suite** finished one length behind him in third. Speedmeister faded to fifth place.

The victory was worth \$49,728 which boosted the 2-year-old's earnings to \$75,528 and pushed his record to a perfect 2-for-2. Prior to his Street Sense triumph, McCraeken was an impressive maiden winner at Churchill Downs on Oct. 2.

"Anytime you win first time out with a 2-year-old you start dreaming and then you got to go to the next step and see how they handle that next step and what they do," Wilkes said. "Today, we were ultra-impressed with him because that was a nice fast horse (Speedmeister) for (trainer) **Mark Casse** and we beat him. I thought that this was a solid group of horses so to beat them like he did, I think he's a nice horse."

McCraeken, a bay colt born on April 13, 2016, is a son of Birdstone out of the **Seeking the Gold** mare **Ivory Empress** and was bred in Kentucky by his owner.

McCraeken rewarded his backers with payoffs of \$18, \$8 and \$5.40 at odds of 8-1 in the field of nine. Balandeen returned \$14 and \$9.80 with Guest Suite finishing back in third and paid \$8.80 to show.

Silent Decree, Speedmeister, **Perro Rojo**, **Singing Bullet**, **Unbridled Eagle** and **General Obvious** completed the order of finish.

Next up for McCracken will be a start in the \$200,000 Kentucky Jockey Club (Grade II), a 1 1/16-mile race for 2-year-olds at Churchill Downs on Saturday, Nov. 26. The Kentucky Jockey Club is part of the “Road to the Kentucky Derby” point series that will determine the field of 20 horses that will compete in the \$2 million-guaranteed Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum Brands (GI) at Churchill Downs on Saturday, May 6.

“That was the goal to run here and then go back in the Jockey Club,” Wilkes said. “He’s got a great mind. He’s a good-feeling colt but he relaxed and switched off of Brian and he got to him very quickly and very easy past them without any effort.”

The Street Sense is named in honor of 2007 Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (Grade I) victor **Street Sense** who became the first horse to win the Breeders’ Cup Juvenile (GI) as a 2-year-old and the Run for the Roses at age 3. He also was the first Champion Two-Year-Old Colt to win the Kentucky Derby since **Spectacular Bid** who won the Kentucky Derby in 1979.

Wilkes was the chief assistant to Hall of Fame trainer **Carl Nafzger** during that run. “Anything associated with **Street Sense** is important to us all – to the whole barn – and to (trainer) **Carl (Nafzger)** and (wife) **Wanda**,” Wilkes said. “With Carl being here to present the trophy is great.”

STREET SENSE QUOTES

IAN WILKES, trainer of McCRAKEN (winner): “Anytime you win first time out with a 2-year-old you start dreaming and then you got to go to the next step and see how they handle that next step and what they do. Today, we were ultra-impressed with him because that was a nice fast horse (Speedmeister) for (trainer) Mark Casse and we beat him. I thought that this was a solid group of horses so to beat them like he did; I think he’s a nice horse.”

Q: Will he run next in the (\$200,000) Kentucky Jockey Club (GII)? “That was the goal to run here and then go back in the Jockey Club. He’s got a great mind. What you saw in the paddock: that’s him. He’s a playful colt, he’s a good-feeling colt but he relaxed and switched off of (jockey) **Brian (Hernandez Jr.)** and he got to him very quickly and very easy past them without any effort.”

Q: What does it mean to win a race named in honor of Street Sense? “Anything associated with **Street Sense** is important to us all, to the whole barn and to (trainer) **Carl (Nafzger)** and (wife) **Wanda**. With Carl being here to present the trophy is great.”

BRIAN HERNANDEZ, JR., jockey of McCRAKEN (winner): “He kind of went to feeling good and wanted to jump up and down and throw little bucks in there (in the paddock before coming onto the track), but we got him back on his feet and he went on to show his stuff. That was the first time he’s done that, but he’s just a good feeling colt and came out here and he wanted to show how good he was, I guess and that’s what that was all about.”

“Obviously we had a good trip. We wanted to get him out the back because this was his first time going one mile. We wanted to get him to do it the right way and once I got him back, he settled great. I got to the half and I kind of checked on him to see how much horse I had and he started getting into those horses without me moving on him at that point and he just zoomed right on by him.”

CHRIS HARTMAN, trainer of BALANDEEN (runner-up): “We’re really happy about the way our horse ran. He ran a big race. They were three across the track in a :45 half and we were about a length off of it. That horse (McCracken) ran past us, but he’s probably a better horse and he just outran us.”

Q: Your horse ran poorly in his first two races, but now he’s turned in three strong ones in-a-row ... “He had excuses his first two races. He’s a quality colt, there’s no doubt about it – though maybe not as good as the horse that beat him.”

Q: Any thoughts about a run back in the Kentucky Jockey Club? “Oh, I don’t know. We’ll wait and see how he comes back and go from there. I don’t know exactly where we’ll head, but it’s definitely a possibility for sure.”

CHANNING HILL, jockey on BALANDEED (runner-up): “He ran huge. He settled so nice. Chris (trainer Chris Hartman) has done a phenomenal job with him just to get him to settle. That was a question mark that I had – to see if he would actually go the mile. He shut himself off real nice down the backside – I think he would have slowed down as much as they would have. Honestly, he was running so well at the top of the stretch I can’t believe I got run by. Not just run by, but that easily. The winner is the real deal, but my horse ran phenomenal. He ran so good and he ran all the way to the wire. He didn’t back up a step. So I’ll give the winner a lot of credit on that one, and hopefully we can best him next time.”

NEIL HOWARD, trainer of GUEST SUITE (third): "I was very pleased and I was glad to hear what Robby (jockey Robby Albarado) had to say about it and Mr. Farish (co-owner William S. Farish) was very pleased. He's probably a little better at two turns and I also think that we saw a nice colt win it."

Q: Will you think about coming back in the Kentucky Jockey Club? "I wouldn't rule it out. I'll definitely talk to Mr. Farish about it. The fact that we'll be able to go two turns will probably give us cause to definitely consider it. That's for sure."

ROBBY ALBARADO, jockey on GUEST SUITE (third): "I was a little bottled-up in the trip. I wish I could have got out earlier. I'm not saying I would have won the race – probably not. But it was a good trip for my horse. He's a nice horse."

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